

FY17 CPA - Thompson Memorial Sign
Additional Materials

Historical Commission answers to CPA Questions

January 15, 2016

Thompson Memorial Stone

- **Can we know for sure whether the photo is actually Christopher Thompson?**

No, as stated in the original proposal, we cannot be certain that the photo is of Christopher Thompson. It is important to note that the identity of the soldier in the photo is *not* important to this project; we thought that CPAC members would be interested in this striking (showing stature and character) photo of someone who is almost certainly one of our Town's black Civil War soldiers. There is no other known surviving photo of any of our black soldiers. It seems to us that it is fairly likely, though of course not certain, that it is Christopher Thompson for the following reason: The source of the photo was a collection of mostly unlabeled photos in the proverbial "shoe box" of family photos in possession of the Harris family. Edythe Roberts Harris is an Amherst native (a 1946 graduate of Amherst High School), and she is directly descended from Christopher Thompson. She is of course related to the four other Amherst Thompsons who fought for the Union (and to some of the other black soldiers from Amherst), but Christopher was her great-great-grandfather.

- **Why are you asking for \$5000 when the Dorsey estimate was for \$2,470 for the more durable granite (marble \$5,636)?**

The estimates from Dorsey Memorial are preliminary and did not factor the additional interpretive language that would be included on the memorial stone. Also, the estimate did not include a contingency that is typically part of project bidding to cover unforeseen expenses. In this case, these expenses could include installation costs that may need to be modified because the memorial would be installed in one of the oldest parts of the cemetery. The Historical Commission therefore asked for enough funds to ensure that the project would be completed--\$3,000 would be cutting it too close and any unused funds would be returned to the CPA.

- **How is this preservation of a historic resource? It seems more like creation of a historic feature, a new memorial stone, which is not allowable under the CPA law.**

In September 2011 the Town of Amherst held a special ceremony in West Cemetery to honor the twenty black men from Amherst who fought for the Union during the Civil War. The ceremony celebrated an aspect of town history that was not well known – and still is not as well-known as it should be. That ceremony brought together many Amherst citizens, black and white, as well as approximately 35 descendants of those soldiers.

Although that ceremony honored all the black soldiers from Amherst, brief remarks were made during the ceremony (by descendants and others) about the five who are known to be buried in West Cemetery – Charles Finnemore, Genalvin Marse, Charles Thompson, John Thompson, and Christopher Thompson (Charles, John, and Christopher being three of the five Amherst Thompsons who fought for the Union). For the first four of those men who were honored that day, there exist surviving gravestones. But for Christopher Thompson

we know only (from his Pelham death record) that he was buried in West Cemetery in what has historically been “the African American section” of the cemetery.

Erecting a memorial stone for Christopher would provide a fitting post-script to that 2011 ceremony. It would again call attention to the important black history of the Town of Amherst, a history of which very few physical reminders remain. Located close to the path that borders the “African American section” of West Cemetery, it would be highly visible to those who walk along the path and would be a source of pride to the black community.

The stone is not only a memorial to Christopher Thompson but a special-purpose historic interpretative sign – just like the other West Cemetery signs. This memorial interpretative sign happens to be made out of stone and is shaped to fit in with and be visually compatible with the setting in which it is proposed to be located—among headstones in a cemetery. That is why we are referring to it as a “memorial stone”. Searching the CPA Coalition’s project database identified 15 historic sign/marker projects funded in the past three years in 12 different communities throughout the State (see attached). These signs/markers are used, just like the Thompson memorial, to preserve a significant piece of history of the community.

This interpretive sign does several things, all of which have been determined by the Amherst Historical Commission to be significant to the history and culture of this community:

It memorializes West Cemetery (a property whose significance is affirmed by its listing on the Massachusetts and National Register of Historic Places), specifically in terms of its role as the final resting place of members of Amherst’s black community who fought in the Civil War.

The sign preserves and memorializes the life and the resting place of the physical remains of a specific Amherst resident who was significant in the history and culture of the Town of Amherst. .

The sign makes specific reference to the other members of his family who served—the remains of some of whom are similarly physically present in the cemetery—in order to highlight and preserve public knowledge of the participation of groups of related men from local black families in the Civil War.

The sign serves to emphasize and provide a focal point for the African-American section of West Cemetery and for public cultural events and private gatherings related to the history of Amherst’s black community. It will serve its historic interpretive purpose and can serve as the focal point for periodic historic celebrations of the heritage it represents

In all of these ways, the proposed stone memorial sign contributes to the preservation of this ancient burying ground which is listed on the state (as well as the national) register of

historic places and has been determined by the local Historical Commission to be significant in the history and culture of the Town of Amherst.

- **Would erecting this memorial create a precedent for the many other veterans who might like us to erect a stone?**

Erecting a memorial stone for Christopher and commemorating the black Civil War soldiers is not likely to lead to similar requests. We know (from Christopher's Pelham death record) that he is buried in Amherst's West Cemetery. However, there is no marker or plaque acknowledging his service to the Town and the importance of black soldiers who fought for the Union during the Civil War. The prospect that other black Civil War soldiers from Amherst would be found to have similar death records specifically indicating burial in West Cemetery seems very small and not a cause for concern.

In terms of other veterans, the Town has a War Memorial that honors those from more recent wars and conflicts. Again, the prospect that this project would set a precedent is not likely.

- **What ever happened to the \$20,000 for wildflowers?**

These funds were approved for landscape restoration in the three oldest sections of West Cemetery—the 1730 Knoll, the African-American section, and the Town Tomb. Restoration would include historically-appropriate plantings, improved access, seating, and interpretive markers. Concept plans have been developed in the West Cemetery Preservation Plan and the Commission worked with Alpha Tau Gamma, the fraternity for the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, to donate time and labor to plant native wildflowers on the 1730 knoll. The Commission is developing a public process to finalize landscape designs and is discussing a program of long-term maintenance and upkeep with Parks and Grounds Division. Before undertaking an extensive landscape restoration project the Commission would like the input of the community and the Town Departments that maintain West Cemetery.

- **Please provide clarification about the cost. If the additional writing on the stone takes up the balance, that seems expensive. What is the remaining \$2,500 going toward?**
Please see the response to question 2 above.

CPA Projects for Historic Signs/Plaques 2012-15

Municipality	Project Description	Year Approved
	Replace old, rotten wooden Historic District Signs marking the boundaries of the Boxford Historic District with new signs.	
Boxford		2015
	Round Top Park Signage: Place sign marking entrances to historic Round Top Park, site of old army training grounds	
Boxford		2015
	Historic Site Signage: Informational signs identifying the historic areas of Chapinville, Assabetville, Woodside, and Peter Whitney Parsonage Historic District.	
Northborough		2015
	Historic Projects: 1. Build an information kiosk and produce historical signage next to the Hearse House, Town Pound and Revolutionary War Cemetery. 2. Continue Town Survey of Old Homes. 3. Restoration of signage within Town Cemeteries.	
Sudbury		2015
	Restoration of the small bank sign that hung on the Grafton Bank located at the Mill Villages Park in South Grafton.	
graston		2014
	Oak Grove Cemetery - Rehabilitation and Restoration of the Cemetery: Improve the front entrance with signage and landscaping; hire a map maker /and/or landscape architect to examine the historic plans of the cemetery and create new ones which will allow us to install granite street markers and historic plantings throughout the 11 acres; create a brochure including a map; and to complete the assessment of Bradford Chapel.	
Gloucester		2014
	Signs to identify the four distinct historic villages that make up the town.	
Chelmsford		2014
	Information Signs for Historical Commission: Informational signs identifying the historic nature of the Old Howard Street Burial Ground and the Brigham Street Burial Ground.	
Northborough		2014
	Historic Homes Signage: Acquire and install decreitive signs on historic houses throughout the town of Stoughton.	
Stoughton		2014
	Creation, outreach, purchase & installation of up to 124 historic "circa" plaques on properties identified in the 2010 community-wide historic properties survey.	
Ashland		2013
	Veterans Street Sign Project: Research and "book" preparation detailing the lives of 24 deceased veterans from Deerfield from the Spanish American War.	
Deerfield		2013
	Purchase & installation of 54 scenic road signs to identify the town's existing 17 scenic roads.	
Ashland		2013
	Historical Markers: Money is to used to purchase more Historical Markers to be set around town. Project Completed and all signs installed May 2015	
Medway		2013
	Newburyport National Register of Historic Places Signage: Design, manufacture and installation of five signs at gateway entries into the Federally-listed Newburyport Historic District.	
Newburyport		2013
Agawam	Replace deteriorating Ann Sullivan Memorial sign	2012

WEST CEMETERY PRESERVATION IMPROVEMENTS

~ 1995 to 2015 ~

- 1995-1996 Several incidents of vandalism draw attention to the deteriorated condition of the cemetery.
- 1997 The Historical Commission forms a West Cemetery Working Group to develop preliminary short-term proposals for making the cemetery more secure. The Commission begins work on a nomination to list West Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1998 Historic Massachusetts Inc. designates West Cemetery one of the "Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources" in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the National Park Service list West Cemetery on the National Register, making the cemetery eligible for state historic preservation grants, which the Commission immediately pursues. MHC awards Amherst a \$10,000 grant for cemetery surveying and planning.
- 1999 The Historical Commission obtains a \$30,000 Historic Preservation Landscape Grant from Mass. DEM to develop a preservation plan for West Cemetery. The Commission hires Denig Design Associates. Lead consultant Martha Lyon assists the Commission in leading a public process and the *West Cemetery Preservation Plan* is completed in June.
- 2000 The Commission identifies enhancing West Cemetery's physical security and increasing local support as priorities in implementing the *West Cemetery Preservation Plan*.
- 2000-2001 The Commission obtains a \$143,000 Historic Preservation Landscape Grant from Mass. DEM to install new perimeter fencing and restore the cemetery's historic Gaylord and Burnett entry gates.
- 2001-2002 During gate restoration and fence installation, adelgid-infested hemlocks screening view of the Carriage Shops building are removed, exposing a long, graffiti-covered wall only 10-15 feet from the oldest part of the cemetery. The Historical Commission spends over a year examining ways to address this problem and decides to use it as an opportunity to create a community history mural to support cemetery preservation efforts. The property owners donate an easement for a mural. Muralist David Fichter is selected to lead the public participation process and design a mural celebrating West Cemetery and Amherst's history.
- 2003 Fall Special Town Meeting authorizes \$19,065 in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for cemetery lighting. Town Meeting first authorizes and then (on a different night) rescinds a \$15,000 appropriation to help underwrite the creation of a community history mural. The Historical Commission plans for fundraising for the West Cemetery history mural.
- 2004 In March, an historian visiting an antique shop in Vermont locates the original cast iron gate for the fence surrounding the Dickinson family plot, missing for 20 years. The gate is returned to the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst and re-installed in June.
- The Historical Commission pursues community-wide fundraising for the community history mural and related preservation improvements in May and over time raises more than \$40,000. Mural installation begins in September. The Historical Commission seeks preliminary estimates to restore headstones in the three oldest (1730-1830) sections of the cemetery.
- 2005 The 2005 Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$150,000 in CPA funds for the first phase of headstone restoration. Mural installation begins in April, continues through June 30, and begins again in September. A temporary welcome sign is installed at the Gaylord gate. A mural dedication ceremony held June 16 includes the New Black Eagle Jazz Band and is attended by hundreds of Amherst residents.
- An RFP for headstone restoration is developed. Responses to the first RFP are not satisfactory and the Commission reconsiders the scope of the project.

- 2006 The 2006 Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$10,000 for historic interpretative signs for the edges of the Dickinson NHR District and for West Cemetery.
- 2007 A new professional estimate of the number of headstones needing restoration is obtained. A revised RFP for restoration of 254 headstones receives numerous responses. Monument Conservation Collaborative (MCC) is selected to do the work.
- 2008 After negotiations, the contract for the headstone restoration is signed with MCC in June. Work begins in September. In addition to restoration, the process and methodology used for each stone is documented and mapped. Progress reports are issued in phases.
- 2009 The 2009 Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$25,000 for study and restoration of ironwork—the fence enclosures at the Dickinson and Cutler family plots and the Town Tomb door, \$30,000 for restoration of Town Tomb stone and brick work, and \$20,000 for planning, design, and selected landscape improvements for the 1730 Knoll, Town Tombs Area, and African American burial site.
- Restoration of 269 headstones in the three oldest sections of the cemetery is completed in October. Headstones in the remainder of the cemetery (1870 and later) remain in need of restoration.
- 2010-2011 Iron work and masonry projects prove to be complex and expensive. The remnants of the Cutler family plot fencing are removed and stored for safe-keeping. The 2010 Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$10,000 to further study and seek to replicate elements of the iron fencing of the Cutler family plot.
- Four headstones in the older portions of the cemetery are vandalized. MCC is hired to restore them, and the work is completed in fall 2010.
- The Historical Commission works with DPW's Parks and Grounds personnel and Alpha Tau Gamma (UMass Stockbridge fraternity) to organize the volunteer donation and planting of perennial bulbs and grasses in the 1730 Knoll and portions of the African American burial site. The Commission arranges to defer regular mowing of these sections of the cemetery, in order to allow this area to grow back into an annually-mowed meadow of grasses and wildflowers typical of the period. Following complaints by families with still-active plots, regular mowing of portions of the African American burial site is resumed.
- 2012 The Annual Town Meeting appropriates \$40,000 to complete repairs to the cast-iron fence surrounding the Dickinson family plot, portions of which are de-laminating.
- 2013 Restoration of the Dickinson family plot fencing is completed in September. The Town hires MCC to reset the headstones of the Dickinson family and several stones in the vicinity of the family plot, to protect them from collapse or damage given heavy visitation by the public.
- 2014 Resetting of stone and brick work for the Town Tomb completed in October.
- 2015 Restoration and rehangng of the iron Town Tomb door is completed in April.
- Design of welcome and entrance signs is completed and approved in May. Fabrication and installation await development of the One East Pleasant project, which has offered to pay for signs and lighting at the west end of the cemetery near the project.
- The Historical Commission negotiates and signs a new agreement with the owners of the property with regard to replication of the Amherst Community History Mural and preservation of the existing mural easement.

FY17 CPA Request – Thompson Memorial Stone Sign

Community Planning Context

Amherst Master Plan

Chapter 6, Natural & Cultural Resources

OBJECTIVE NC.1 - Promote the preservation, appreciation, and sustainable use of our historical and cultural resources for residents and visitors.

Historic and cultural resources foster a connection to the Amherst community, generate a sense of pride among its residents, and attract visitors to the Town. Appropriate protection and celebration of these resources will ensure that the community's heritage and unique character are preserved and passed on to future generations. Implementation of the 2005 Amherst Preservation Plan and the following strategies will preserve important community character for Amherst's future while acting as a crucial form of local economic development.

STRATEGIES

NC.1.F Complete, expand, and improve the existing wayfinding sign system, to mark historic districts and village centers, and to encourage tourism.

An improved system of wayfinding and historic site signs is needed for tourists and visitors, and can also be essential for increasing overall public awareness about—and thereby protecting—Amherst's historic resources.

The Historical Commission, Design Review Board, Department of Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, and the Town/Commercial Relations Committee, among others, should engage in a collaborative initiative to update, enhance, and fund the wayfinding sign system in Amherst.

Amherst Preservation Plan

Section 6, Preservation Action Plan

Immediate Preservation Efforts (One to Three Years)

Physical Preservation Actions

- Restore the 1730 Knoll, Town Tomb, Cutler Plot, African American burial area and headstones at West Cemetery, per the recommendations of the West Cemetery Preservation Plan.

West Cemetery Preservation Plan

Recommendations

Project 5: African American Burial Site

Located along the Cemetery's eastern edge, this grassy swath contain graves of Amherst's African American citizens. Treating this area will complete improvement to the Cemetery's oldest section, and will honor some of the less fortunate members of the Amherst Community. Recommendations include:

... In addition to these treatments, we recommend that the African American Burial Site be marked with an interpretive sign, accompanied by a bench. This site, away from the Cemetery entrances, tucked behind the Knoll and shaded by Austrian Pines, offers a quiet spot for contemplation, and an ideal location for learning about Amherst's historically diverse population.

NOTE: The community planning processes leading to creation of the *Amherst Preservation Plan* and *West Cemetery Preservation Plan* were both developed and conducted with the assistance of Northampton historic preservation consultant and landscape architect Martha Lyon. Ms. Lyon has been involved in significant historic preservation projects all over New England and is currently involved in designing a Massachusetts African American Veterans' Memorial Park in Boston.

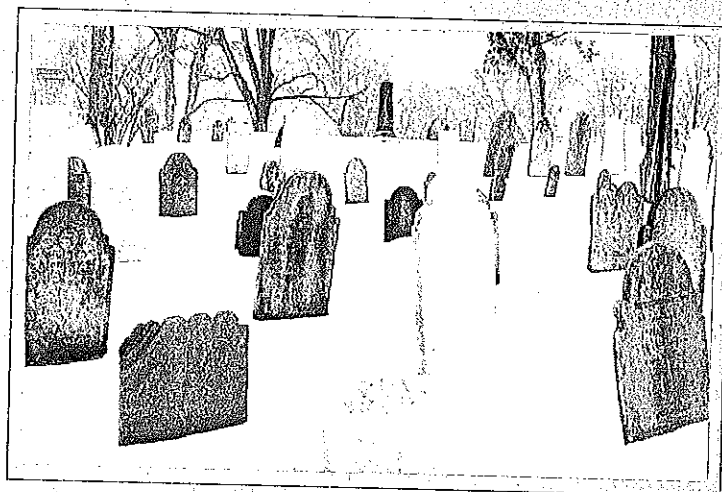
When contacted regarding the Thompson memorial stone sign proposal, Ms. Lyon, who has been involved in numerous CPA-funded projects in Massachusetts, offered the opinion that such historic interpretive sign projects both are CPA-eligible and need to be, because "they are being used to preserve a memory of a person and population, which can serve an equally important preservation function" as the direct preservation or restoration of any surviving artifact.

Highlighting and interpreting the history of people, events, and artifacts that have not survived is as important to the preservation of a community's historic and archeological resources as is the preservation of surviving artifacts. Preserving knowledge of the community's history adds meaning and significance to remaining artifacts and helps build a constituency for their preservation. If CPA funding for historic preservation was limited only to surviving artifacts, that would preserve and illumine only a fraction of any community's story, which would fall far short of meeting the purpose of the Community Preservation Act. That is why dozens of historic interpretive sign projects all over the Commonwealth have been funded under the CPA program since its inception.

Examples of similar historic interpretive memorial stone signs from across the country are attached.

*West Cemetery
Amherst, Massachusetts*

Preservation Plan

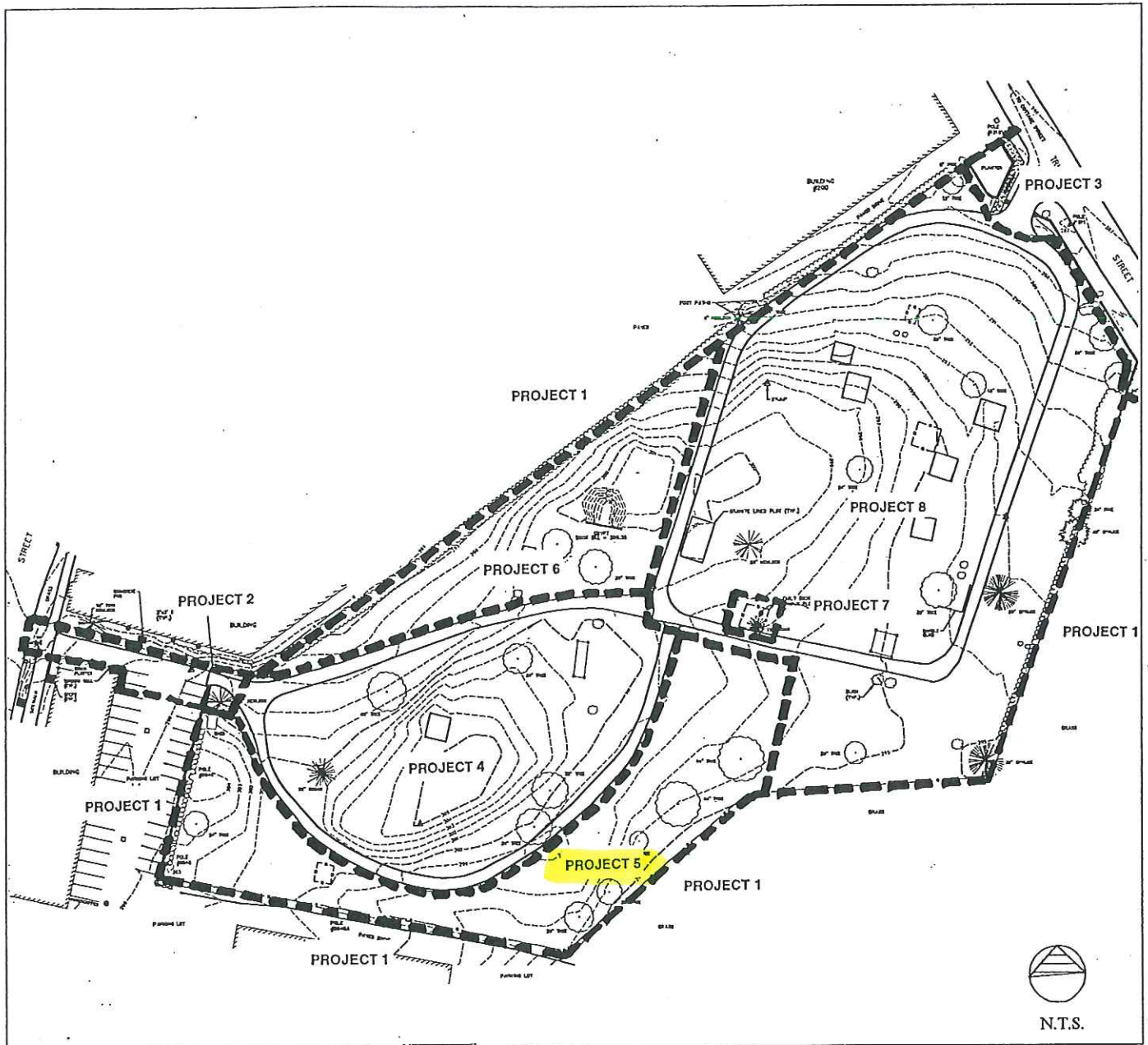


*Prepared by
Denig Design Associates, Inc., Landscape Architects*

*with
CME Associates, Inc., Consulting Engineers
Beij, Williams & Zito, Inc., Gravestone Conservators
Cassidy Brothers Forge, Inc., Metals Conservators*



June 1999



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for treating the historic landscape at West Cemetery are organized around a series of eight projects. Each covers a distinct geographic region of the Cemetery, as shown in the graphic to the left. The projects include:

Project 1: West Cemetery Fence

Project 2: Gaylord Entrance

Project 3: Burnham Entrance

Project 4: 1730 "Knoll"

Project 5: African American Burial Site

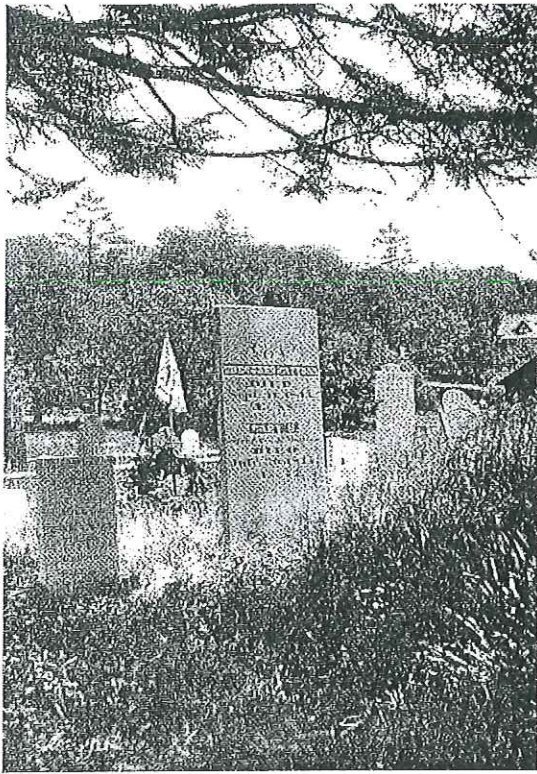
Project 6: Town Tomb

Project 7: Dickinson Plot

Project 8: 1870 Section

WEST CEMETERY
TOWN OF AMHERST
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

PRESERVATION PLAN
DENIG DESIGN ASSOCIATES, INC.
110 MAIN STREET
NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS



It is likely that the Cemetery's oldest section once resembled a meadow or pasture. By replacing the turf in the 1730 Section with woody groundcovers and perennials, this 18th century effect can be restored. Photo c. 1900, courtesy of the Jones Library, Special Collections.

- ♦ **Preserving or restoring granite copings.** In addition to the monuments and markers, the granite copings, demarcating family plots should be preserved or restored. Treatment methods for each appear in the Appendix to this plan.
- ♦ **Rehabilitating the dirt and turf roadway.** This was probably the Cemetery's first, laid out in 1854. Currently the material covering them ranges from gravel to dirt to turf. Dirt and turf evoke the image of the 18th and 19th burial ground, and we recommend a stabilized combination of these materials remain.

T Located along the Cemetery's eastern edge, this grassy swath contains graves of Amherst's African American citizens. Treating this area will complete improvements to the Cemetery's oldest section, and will honor some of the less fortunate members of the Amherst community. Recommendations include:

- ♦ **Rehabilitating the floor of the African American Burial Site.** Today covered with turf, the ground requires regular mowing and does not adequately reflect the historic character of this area. Planting and encouraging growth of shade-loving groundcovers, such as Periwinkle, Lily-of-the-Valley, Aegopodium and others, will give the area a distinctive character, more true to its past. (Refer to the "Recommendations" section of this Plan for a list of recommended species.)

Project 5: African American Burial Site



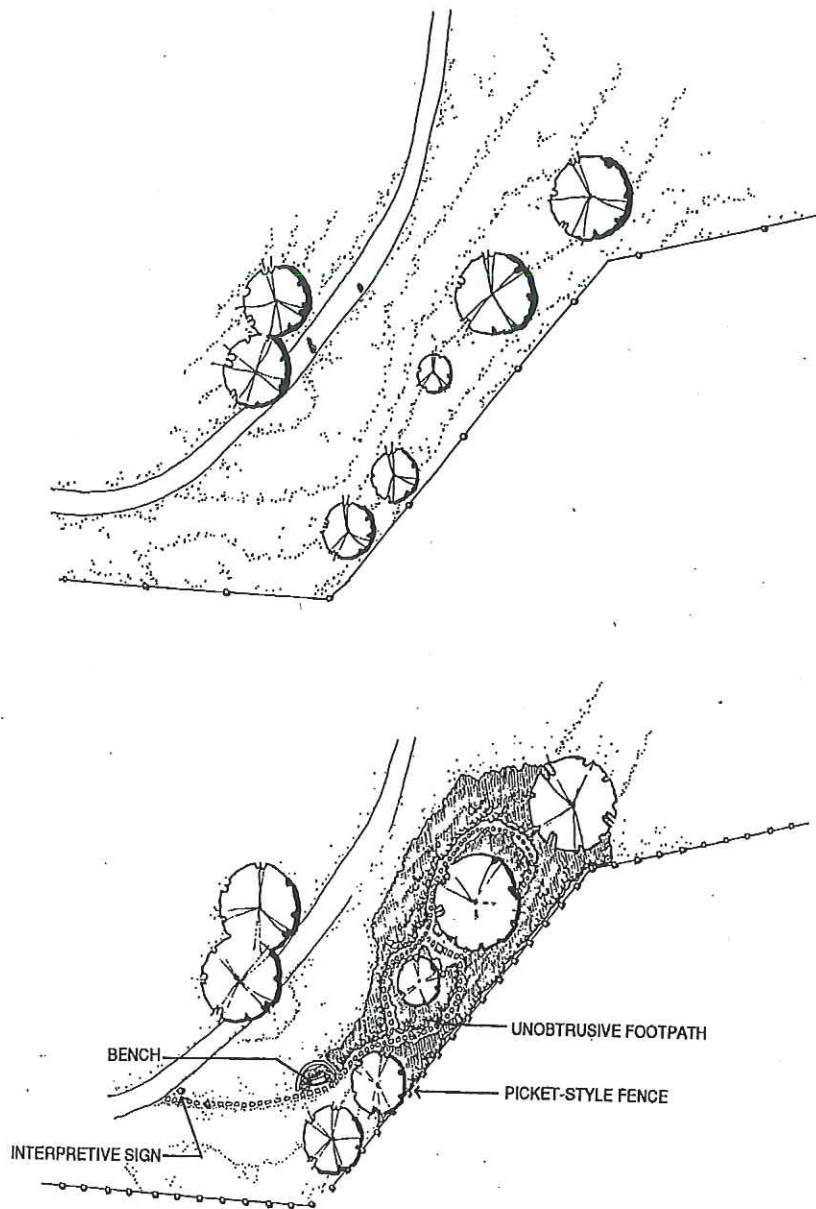
The African American Burial Site. Lack of monuments and markers distinguishes this historic area from the remainder of the Cemetery.

- ♦ ***Preserving the historic ornamental trees.*** The area contains several mature ornamentals, including a Gingko and Katsura. The Town should make every effort to stabilize these, as they provide shade and a sense of scale, and add to the Cemetery's historic character.
- ♦ ***Adding lighting.*** Tree-mounted lighting, resembling moonlight, can be added to the canopies of tall trees, allowing police better views into the Cemetery at night.

The following elements lie within close proximity to the African American Burial Site, and while unrelated, could be included in this project:

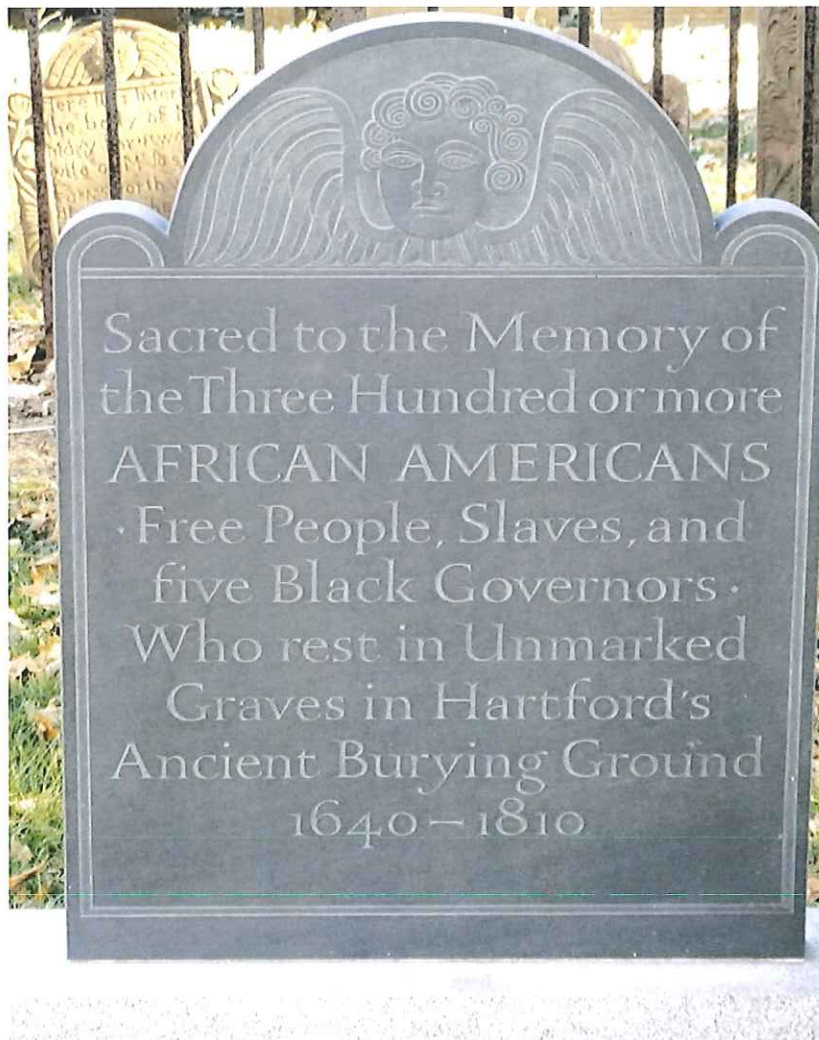
- ♦ ***Reconstructing the Cutler plot fencing.*** One of only two ornamental fences surrounding family plots, the Cutler plot fencing is decayed and damaged. Reconstructing this would help revive the Victorian appearance that dominated the Cemetery during the latter half of the 19th century. Reconstruction is required because of the fence's severe condition. Recommended treatment appears in Appendix B of this Plan.
- ♦ ***Restoring monuments and markers.*** This area contains over twenty memorials in need of restoration. Repair of these will complete the preservation of the Cemetery's oldest section. Recommended treatments appear in Appendix A of this Plan.

In addition to these treatments, we recommend that the African American Burial Site be marked with an interpretive sign, accompanied by a bench. This site, away from the Cemetery entrances, tucked behind the Knoll and shaded by Austrian Pines, offers a quiet spot for contemplation, and an ideal location for learning about Amherst's historically diverse population.



The African American Burial Site before and after rehabilitation. New footpaths, interpretive signs, and seating allow visitors a more intimate experience with this unmarked area.

FY17 CPA - Thompson Memorial Sign
Examples of Historic Interpretive Memorial Stone Signs



Ancient Burying Ground, Hartford, CT – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Wooster Cemetery, Danbury, CT – Historic interpretive memorial stone sign



African American Burial Ground, Portsmouth, NH
– Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Wheat Community African American Burial Ground, Roane Co, TN. See also next page.



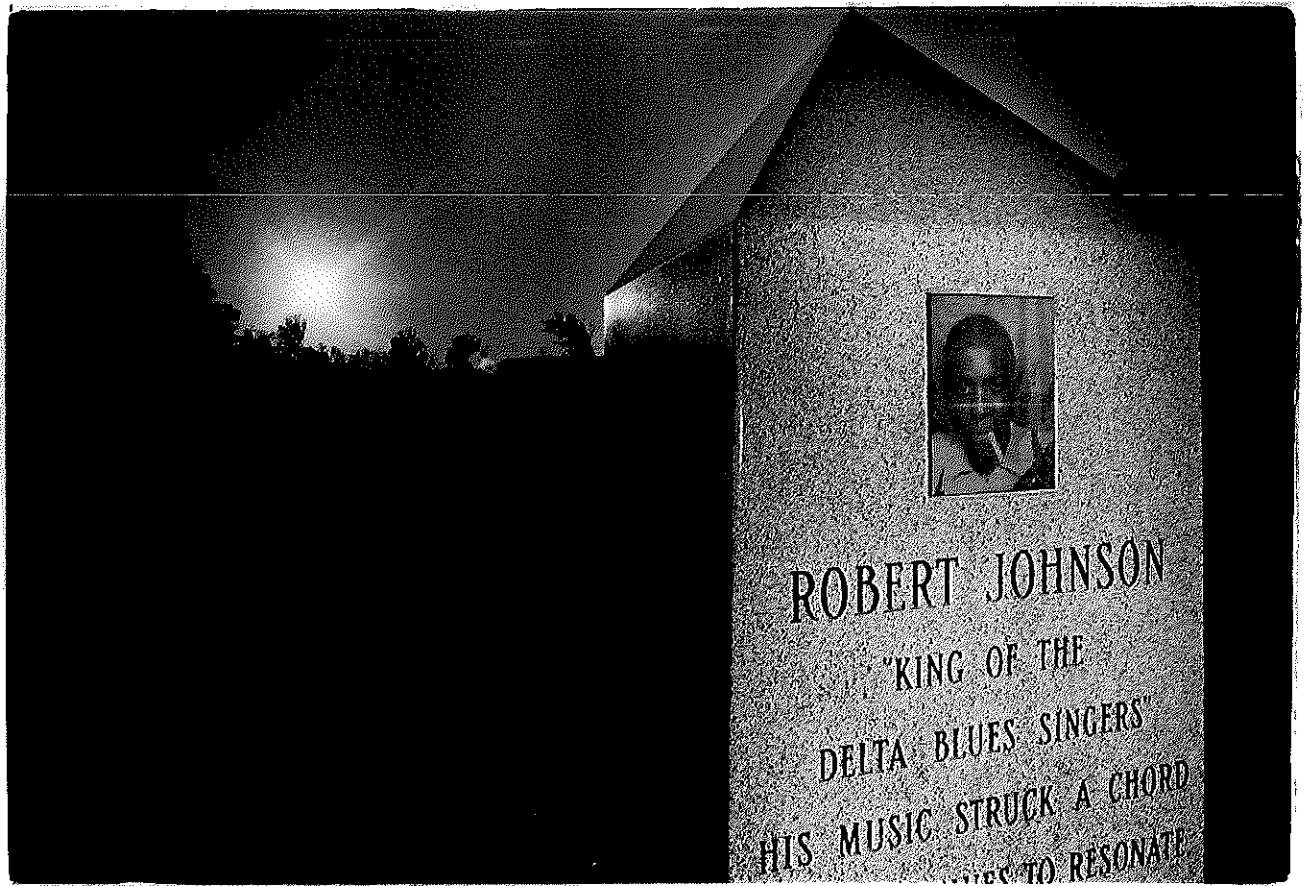
Wheat Community African American Burial Ground, Roane Co, TN
- Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



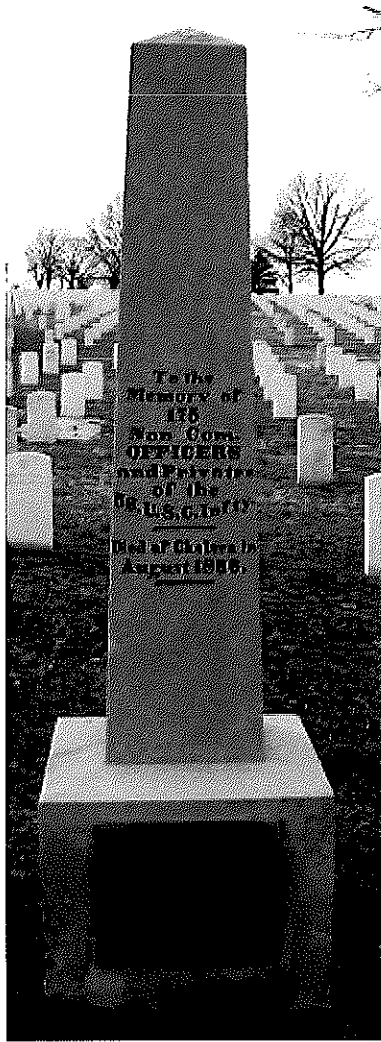
Paynes Cemetery, Paynes Crossing (black community), Ohio
– Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Woodlawn Cemetery, Elmira, NY – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



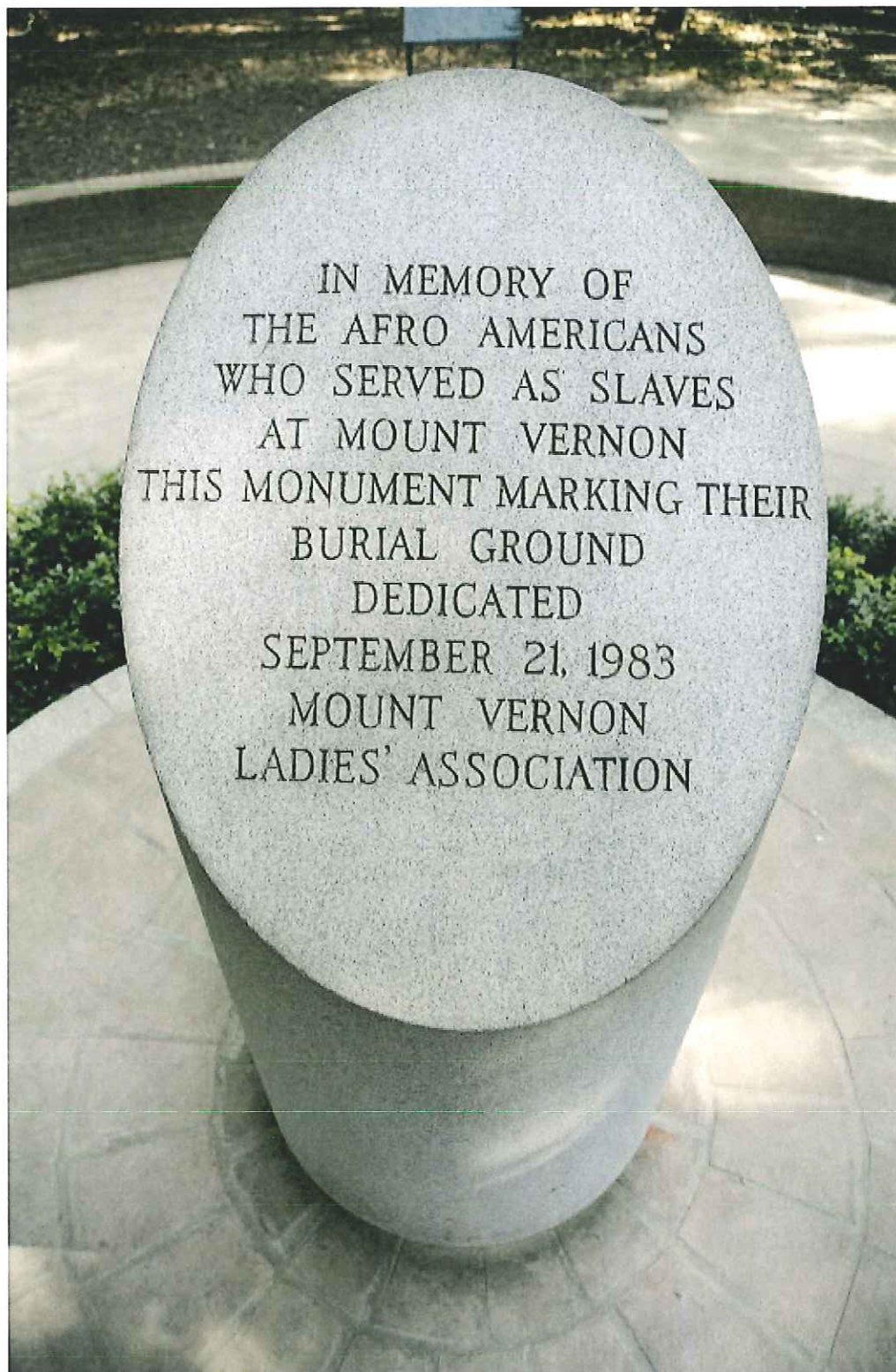
Mount Zion Church cemetery, Quito, MS - Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, MO
– Historic interpretive memorial stone sign



Zora Neal Hurston, Dust Tracks Heritage Trail, Eatonville, Florida – Historical interpretive stone signs



Slave Cemetery, Mount Vernon, VA – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Glendale, Queens, NY, Maple Grove Cemetery – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Chief Joseph Cemetery, Joseph, OR – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Calvary Cemetery, St. Louis, MO – Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Roadside cemetery, Victoria, KS - Historical interpretive memorial stone sign



Roadside cemetery, Victoria, KS - Historical interpretive memorial stone sign